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ABSTRACT

Set in the context of shifting economic and social demands, the educational scene during the last part of the 20th century is discussed. Increasing numbers of people of all ages will be involved in different kinds of learning for varying purposes. Some will want to learn for personal satisfaction and improvement, others will need to learn to meet changes in technology and job requirements. Many learners will want and seek appraisal and assessment of their achievement. To this end, present instruments and procedures may need to be modified and improved. Learning opportunities will continue to expand and diversify, enabling prospective students to continue their education in schools, colleges and universities, on the job, at learning centers, or at home via correspondence, television, newspapers, and satellites. (Author/RL)

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Assessing Learning in a Learning Society

Digest of remarks by George H. Hanford, president of the College Board, for delivery Tuesday, May 27, 1980, to the International Association for Educational Assessment at Sao Paulo, Brazil.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

During the last part of the 20th century, we will witness a rapidly-changing educational scene, set in the context of shifting economic and social demands. We will see increasing numbers of people of all ages involved in different kinds of learning for varying purposes. Some will want to learn for personal satisfaction and improvement; others will need to learn to meet changes in technology and job requirements.

Many learners will want and seek appraisal and assessment of their achievement and to this end, such present instruments and procedures as credit by examination may need to be modified and improved. Other and newer ideas and systems may emerge soon, utilizing different concepts of measurement and new technologies.

Learning opportunities will continue to expand and diversify, enabling prospective students to continue their education at schools; in colleges and universities; on the job; at learning centers; or at home, via correspondence, television, newspapers, and satellites.

The challenge for educators will be to coordinate these opportunities and make them widely known to all individuals who may benefit. This job will grow more complex in the years just ahead, but will be none the less rewarding.

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I. Introduction

What is the secret to learning, how are people motivated to do it, and how should they be rewarded--if at all? One of our most prominent American scholars and social critics, John Gardner, has wondered about this. "What is it that keeps alive in some people the natural spark of curiosity, eagerness, hunger for life and experience," Gardner asks, "and how may we rekindle that spark when it flickers out? If we ever solve that problem, we will be at the threshold of a new era, not only in education but in human experience."

Some of these questions lie at the heart of our consideration here of ways and means to break the cycle of ignorance, apathy and deprivation and to increase dramatically opportunities for education in all our countries.

Measurement and assessment will play a key role in helping bring about these changes, as we search together for better ways for expanding education and employment, and, perhaps more important, knowledge and self-understanding.

II. Brief History

My own country has a long history of expanding and improving educational opportunities for a steadily growing population. This tradition began only sixteen years after the Pilgrims landed, when they created Harvard College, and the most important fact about it, as Frederick Rudolph

says, is that it was absolutely necessary. A commonwealth could not be created without "leaders disciplined by knowledge and learning. . . . They could not afford to leave its shaping to whim, fate, accident, indecision, incompetence, or carelessness. In the future the state would need competent rulers, the church would require a learned clergy, and society itself would need the adornment of cultured men".*

The question of bringing these opportunities to all segments of the population, not just the young, raises different problems of social, economic, and political priorities in our time, and it is these issues that we confront when we begin to talk of a learning society. Other nations have contemplated the idea of education for all, throughout a lifetime, but the recent manifestations of adult and continuing education date to the early part of the 19th century when, in 1836, in England, the University of London was founded as an examining body, not a teaching institution, with a mission of conferring degrees on so-called external candidates on the basis of their performance. Such degrees are still being awarded by that university, and by a growing number of others, too. Early American forms of adult education were the public lectures given in the Lyceum around 1826, and the Lowell Institute of Boston, which was endowed in 1836. The Chautauqua Movement in 1873 introduced the idea of discussion groups and a modified lecture system--which persists today in a different format. Free public lectures under the Department of Education began in the city of New York in 1904, not long after the College Entrance Examination Board was formed as a way to help improve access to higher education for growing numbers of students moving from various secondary school to diverse colleges and universities.

* The American College and University, New York, Knopf, 1962

There have been a number of major developments in education during the past century that have steadily broadened our education base and regularly reinforced the concept of education for all. I am thinking, for instance, of the enactment during the Civil War of the Morrill (Land Grant College) Act; of the community college movement since 1900--a movement that now encompasses more than 900 two-year institutions enrolling a million students; of the so-called GI Bill of Rights following World War II; of the National Defense Education Act; and of the many laws passed during the Johnson administration, comprising a vital part of the "great society."

It is useful, however, for us to remember when we view the U.S. educational system as always having been a well-organized, systematic, sequential system moving from kindergarten to elementary school to secondary school and on to college and graduate school, that we have a history of diversity and experimentation, too, one that extends as I have suggested, well into the past. As Baird Whitlock points out in his recent book, "over two hundred years ago at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, Josiah Quincy of Boston, aged 6, was a classmate of James Anderson of Londonderry, New Hampshire, aged 30." And, that "Cotton Mather graduated from Harvard at 16, as did Jonathan Edwards from Yale. . . .later in the 19th century, Henry Adams entered Harvard at 16 as an average student if we are to believe his own estimate of his intellectual powers or his rank in class."*

One of our leading, most influential, and controversial thinkers in education during this century was John Dewey--his influence has touched

*Don't Hold Them Back. New York, College Board, 1978

generations of teacher, and others. I would remind you that Dewey in a very real sense led a revolt against abstract learning, arguing that education was a tool that should enable a citizen to integrate his culture and vocation effectively and usefully. We find little trouble with that definition today, especially as we consider the critical relationships between education and work, and as we note the increasing need for flexibility of individual plans for education and careers, at varying stages of a lifetime.

III. More recent developments

Without going into much detail, I would remind you that the College Board has played an important role, especially during the past two decades, in helping expand both opportunities for learning and the means for recognizing achievement; in other words, in helping assess learning in a society of learners. In the past decade alone lifelong learning has undergone dramatic growth as many of you know. Our recent surveys estimate that between 17 million and 32 million adults in the United States are currently participating in classes, workshops, job training, discussion groups, or some other form of organized instruction. A third of today's college students are over age 25. There are five million part-time adult learners, or nearly 40 percent of the total enrollment in postsecondary education today --and another ten million people are involved in non-degree credit studies.

IV. Credit by examination

The roots of the College Board's interest in credit by examination as one important means of recognition of learning reach back nearly three decades. Early in the 1950's, progressive thinkers in both schools and

colleges had been urging the College Board to address the problem of able and ambitious high school students who were fully capable of doing college-level work but thwarted by structure and curriculum. It was suggested that there should be a plan to break the academic lock-step for those students and enable them to receive exemption or college credit for special achievement in secondary schools. After research and planning, the Board became involved in the development of the Advanced Placement Program in cooperation with committees of teachers and other advisors, and by 1955 AP had emerged as a four-part effort including syllabus-based courses in the schools; tests that were predominantly essay in format; college and university agreements to award credit or placement; and yearly conferences involving school teachers and college professors. In the early days, only a few dozen of the nation's 25,000 secondary schools participated, and less than a thousand students took the examinations in 1954-55. By contrast, this year over 100,000 students are involved, along with thousands of schools; and some 1,500 colleges will give credit or placement based on AP performance. It is perhaps important to note that AP is widely used today in assessing achievement and awarding placement and credit, not as an admissions tool or instrument of selectivity.

The success of AP (which is now celebrating its 25th anniversary) encouraged College Board leadership to extend the concept of recognizing learning by exploring the possibility of developing instruments and procedures that could be used in meeting the needs of students of varying ages who were not institutionally based. Some planning had already been done by Educational Testing Service and others in the field, and support came from such leading educational organizations as the American Council on Education, whose Commission on Educational Credit in the middle 1960's urged post-

secondary institutions to expand policies for measuring and awarding credit. Let me quote in brief part of their statement:
"Full and effective use of all educational resources is a worthy educational and social goal. Achieving this goal will depend to a large extent on providing equitable recognition for extra-institutional learning."

With strong support also from the Carnegie Corporation, which contributed several million dollars in grants during the early years, the College Board and ETS moved to develop a set of comprehensive tests of college-level achievement which became the basis for the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). An advisory Council on College-Level Examinations, composed of distinguished educators, set objectives for the CLEP program as it got under way in 1966 with only a handful of candidates. The council urged that the program should provide instruments for measuring learning whereever it had been acquired, and that it would be aimed especially at working men and women, minorities, and the military. A parallel objective was to gain acceptance for the concept through favorable college policies toward granting academic credit based on performance on the examinations.

During 1978-79, nearly 100,000 civilian students and 46,000 military personnel took more than 295,000 CLEP examinations to demonstrate their knowledge of college-level subjects learned outside the classroom. As many of you know, there are presently five General Examinations in the CLEP battery, covering English composition, the humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences-history, and there are 47 Subject Examinations in

a wide variety of liberal arts and career-related areas. These include, for example, business examinations covering computers and data processing, accounting, marketing, and business law; and such other fields as dental auxiliary education, mathematics, medical technology, nursing, educational psychology, Afro-American History, American Government, and Western Civilization.

General Exams consist of multiple-choice questions with the exception of one version of the English Composition Examination, and the tests are 90 minutes in length. The Subject Exams are also 90 minutes in length and use multiple-choice questions; some have optional essay sections.

CLEP examinations are offered every month at centers throughout the United States. Anyone may register, and, for nominal fees, take one or several of the tests. CLEP itself does not grant college credit, but more than 1,700 education institutions in all 50 states will offer credit on the basis of CLEP scores. Many businesses, industries, government agencies, and professional groups also use CLEP test results to meet their educational requirements for advancement, licensing, and admission to further training.

V. New patterns of transition

Though the use of CLEP and its accompanying services grew dramatically in the past decade, the College Board also expanded its research and exploration of other areas of need by individuals in the process of transition. It became increasingly clear that some of the difficult educational questions in the last quarter of this century would focus on some of the emerging prob-

lems of transition--problems beyond the traditional ones involved in moving from school to college. The new emphasis looked toward transition from school to work, college to work, and work back to education, and reflected some of the concerns expressed in this conference's theme of breaking down barriers to education and employment.

Contemplating a steadily-declining cohort of college-age youth due to a depressed birth rate since the 1960's, and reviewing the needs of a volatile and unpredictable economy, the Board followed its tradition of flexibility by developing new programs and concepts that stressed openness and inclusion, placement, and remediation, and improved services to aid colleges and other agencies in meeting needs in these areas. For two full years 1971-73, a distinguished Commission on Non-Traditional Study was sponsored by the College Board and ETS to examine the problems and needs of nontraditional learners, and in 1973 published their detailed findings and recommendations in a volume entitled Diversity by Design. Much of their work has been reflected in subsequent program developments and planning, and most recently has been advanced by the extensive three-year activities (1977-80) of the Board's Future Directions for a Learning Society, funded in large measure by a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation.

In more recent years, we have developed such new programs as the Career Skills Assessment Program, which is serving over 100,000 students a year. Designed in cooperation with several state education departments, CSAP seeks to identify specific student strengths and weaknesses in career planning and development areas, and offers six different measures that can be used singly or in various combinations by students in high schools, community colleges, and adult programs for instructional, guidance, and curriculum planning purposes.

Certainly, many signs point toward the need for such services and aids to students and counselors. A major report by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education last year entitled "Giving Youth a Better Chance," dramatically reminded us that sweeping changes in schooling and job preparation will be needed in the years ahead, particularly for those not going on to college. High priority is given by the report to changes aimed at making learning more palatable and easing the transitions between education and work. "Young people who are failing to learn how to function effectively in a democratic society," the report notes, "present a problem to the entire society." Among recommendations were that there be an end to compulsory schooling at the age of 16, already the norm for most of our states now; the establishment of a National Youth Service Foundation to give young people a chance to serve their communities in lieu of further education or military service; extensive high school level work-study programs modeled after the existing and effective College Work Study program; and increasing attention to the teaching of basic skills in the high school.

VI. The expansion of learning opportunities

Learning opportunities, and the ways to validate them, exist throughout the society, and are becoming increasingly available. I have concentrated thus far on areas and linkages best known to us in the academic world, but the ramifications of a learning society continue to spread, and most individuals will in the next few years be not only able but also probably required to adapt and adjust their lives and skills.

In capsule form let me suggest ten avenues and opportunities for those wishing to participate in or demonstrate learning in one way or another. Many of these, you will note, are also innovative and flexible forms that have in some instances been developed to aid in the education to work to education transitions that are becoming common to large segments of our population.

1. The regular public school systems, with their variety of evening courses, vocational training opportunities, and special courses in literacy education for adults and foreign-born.

2. Trade, technical and business schools. Large numbers of private trade, technical and business schools now offer training specially-tailored for careers in many fields too numerous to list here. Most schools are accredited or licensed by state or regional agencies and offer both full and part-time courses.

3. Correspondence courses. Home study or correspondence courses are offered by many groups, including some 60 colleges and universities around the country. Some can be taken for college credit, and count towards a college degree.

4. Colleges and universities. The scope and diversity of our system of higher education is widely known so I will not detail it for you, but will note that two-year or community colleges have become the most successful phenonemon of recent times, now enrolling a majority of incoming freshmen in the country each year. Of course, these colleges conduct a wide range of activities beyond the academic, and some, such as Miami Dade in Florida which has four campuses are among the largest institutions offering post-secondary education. Many two- and four-year colleges do now offer credit for learning, based on examinations or in some cases on life experience

(cite CAEL) and the tradition of university extension services is well-known, especially as it has developed in such large state universities as the University of California. However, an interesting variation of the regular university system has developed within the past ten or fifteen years--with origins in the University of London experience that I mentioned earlier, but also utilizing some uniquely American variations and concepts, too.

5. Universities without walls. Of this new genre, I refer first to the informal network sponsored by the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, which operates an integrated program among its members, providing individual programs for each student enrolled, but generally requiring that about a third of the credits needed for graduation be earned in classes given on campus. Secondly, let me include four important external degree programs. They are, the Regents External Degree Program of the University of the State of New York; Thomas A. Edison College, in Princeton, New Jersey, the Board of State Academic Awards, in Hartford. Connecticut; and the Board of Governors Bachelor of Arts Degree Program, Springfield, Illinois. In most of these arrangements, students work out an individualized degree program with a mentor through a series of learning contracts that contain activities such as independent study projects. Most of these programs also make considerable use of such examinations as CLEP.

I might add a recent postscript here about the announcement early this month that Britain's Open University will activate and expand its operations in the United States to involve seven colleges and universities and 11 television stations in a new effort to provide nationwide TV-assisted college courses leading to a bachelor's degree. This new endeavor will begin in September and be sponsored by the National University Consortium, utilizing

some funding by the Carnegie Corporation. Some of you may remember that the Open University began a bit over ten years ago in England, and has had one limited trial run here, in which the College Board and ETS joined to sponsor experimental work with Open University programs and materials at three universities.

6. Business. industry, and union systems. Education programs supported by or involving business have become a multibillion dollar activity, with complex motivations, accruing to the benefit of the sponsor but often to the employee's benefit and advancement, too. Recent estimates by the American Society for Training and Development suggest some $40 billion a year is being spent on a wide range of education and training programs, extending from teaching basic English to sophisticated instruction in marketing, technical fields, and human relations. An 1979 guide by the American Council on Education indicates that about 900 credit courses are now being offered by 80 different private companies, trade unions, government bodies and others. The Xerox Company, as one instance, operates its international center for training and management development in Leesburg, Virginia--a 2,000 acre facility that accommodates over a thousand students. And one of my favorite illustrations is the fact that last year American Telephone and Telegraph spent about $700 million on education programs for its employees, or more than triple the $213 million annual budget of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Many unions offer tuition benefits for their members and also operate study and learning centers to aid those interested in continuing or advancing their education.

7. Military. For military personnel, there are numerous learning opportunities available while in the service, and others that are provided

subsequently in the form of veterans training and education benefits. The program known as DANTES (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support) in particular, offers individuals in the service opportunities for credit by examination, and makes extensive use of CLEP.

8. Museums and libraries. I think these traditional sources are well-known to us, but in recent years both agencies have extended and diversified their educational offerings in many centers to include lecture series, credit courses, and related activities, often keyed to adult learners.

9. Community organizations and learning networks. Many local and state units now sponsor organized systems and educational information centers. North Carolina has a statewide network of such centers. Kansas and Rhode Island operate statewide telephone linkages providing access to information about postsecondary education and career opportunities. Community-based educational counseling for adults is sponsored by the University of Wisconsin Extension, which operates in that state in such sites as libraries, courthouses, and community agencies. Oregon and several other states have computerized career information services available through schools and other locations. There are now twenty-two educational opportunity centers funded by the federal government and located in different areas to provide information on education and careers.

10. The mass media. Newspapers, radio, and television are now all engaged in various kinds of educational activities. The National Endowment for the Humanities, as you may know, now sponsors a series of courses

through newspapers, and the College Board has shared in a part of the examination segment of this endeavor. Both TV and radio have a fairly long history of involvement in educational programming--some good, some not so good. More recently, television has produced many excellent programs and series offered for credit through university cooperation in many cities.

Evolving media. Some natural byproducts of television and computer technology have begun to take root, and more are sure to follow, opening up new opportunities for learners and for assessment of their efforts. Let me cite just one, QUBE, a wedding of cable TV and computer capabilities, tried out in experimental form in Columbus, Ohio, but now considering expansion to other cities. This Warnacc system ties individual homes or terminals to a central cable broadcasting source and offers programs on as many as 30 channels along with the capability, still being perfected, of having audience (viewer) response and participation. There are other rapidly developing products with great potential--videodiscs, for instance --that may be the wave of the learning future.

VII Challenges facing a learning society.

My overview of some of the changes taking place among learners has understandably focused on the United States, but I think that many of you know the Board's long-term interest in working with students and educators from other countries on a range of problems, including those we are discussing at this conference. We have the better part of two decades now been operating an Office of Latin American Activities in Puerto Rico, serving several Latin countries through professional training, technical assistance, and related programs to aid educators, instituions and governmental agencies.

As we contemplate together the essence of learning and of human motivation--what inspires people to learn, to plan, to dream, let us listen to Jorge Amado, the eminent Brazilian novelist, a he wonders in the concluding postscript to his book Home is the Sailor: "How does man rise above his journey through his life: by the day-to-day scheming and intrigue, or by the untrammeled dream that knows neither frontiers nor limitations....where is the truth, please tell me--in the tiny reality of each of us, or in the immense human dream?"

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We have for many years also worked through our Office of International Relations on workshops, publications, and similar services to aid American students overseas and foreign students coming to the United States to study. We remain keenly aware, too, of the serious lag in foreign language study in this country, and sponsored a special conference on the topic earlier this year in Chicago.

I am suggesting that while my remarks concentrate on change and challenge in the United States, I feel that they have implications for all of your nations as well, and I hope that we will be able to continue and expand our working relationships in such meetings as these. Some of the important future challenges that we face, also confront you. For instance, who will pay for the obviously needed continuation and expansion of learning opportunities and the new assessments of learning needed in the 1980's? What will be the future role of government in this process? What share of the challenge will be borne by private industry and business?

Let me summarize with this cogent observation from the Commission on Non-Traditional Study: "Whether the encouragement of learning is based on old or new concepts is, in most instances, irrelevant. The real tests are whether the concepts meet the needs of the learner and are conducive to high-quality results. These criteria take precedence over all else. Additional options for students need not be interpreted as a relaxing of academic rigor if they are properly conceived, professionally supervised, and appropriately evaluated for their true worth. They can, in their various and diverse forms, be part of the continuing movement that has periodically added vitality to higher education."